

- **\*Read Matthew 14:22-33\*** As our Lord is making His way around the country teaching of repentance and the coming judgement, He is continually followed by large multitudes who are amazed by miraculous deeds. Once such occasion that we are very familiar with is found here in **Matthew 14** and it is also found in **Mark 6** and **John 6**. In these texts, Jesus feeds the 5,000 with nothing more than 5 loaves of bread and two fish. Following this famous meal, Jesus sends His Apostles away and He himself goes up onto the mountain to meditate and pray to His Heavenly Father.
- As Jesus is alone praying, the Apostles' boat continues to make itself away from Jesus and storms come upon the waters. Some of the Apostles were fisherman so a little bit of a storm on the water wasn't something that would totally throw them off. However....seeing a person walking on water...now that would be something that could totally freak anyone out. That's exactly what they see. They see a person walking on the water. No way a person could actually be walking on water, right?? So surely this must be a ghost, they thought. But Jesus called out to them and announced that it was He.
- Peter calls out for assurance asking Jesus to command Him to come out onto the water if it is truly who He said He was. Jesus tells him to come, and Peter begins His trek out to Jesus, but senses the ongoing storms around him and begins to sink. He calls out to Jesus, and the Lord grabs him and lifts him up. He gives Peter a little rebuke for his lack of faith, but by this time none of the men were doubting for they all exclaimed that Jesus was truly the Son of God.
- Many a Bible class, many a sermon, may a lesson, many a personal study have considered this text, and many lessons have been drawn from it. However, might I suggest to you that one simple thing happened that allowed this story to take place...that one small, simple thing was Peter getting out of the boat. **(v.29)** Even though they were in the middle of a storm, the sea savvy Peter knew that they were in the safest place they could be while in the boat. Yet, Peter was willing to leave the safety of the boat if Jesus called him to do so. In our lives, we can easily settle for staying in the places where we feel most safe and comfortable.
- However, just as Jesus called Peter to "come!", so Jesus calls us to stretch ourselves and be willing to go outside of the comfort zones we might find ourselves in in this life. For some people, their comfort zone is a life that is dedicated to self. For others, our comfort zone is the place of mediocrity as Christians. And still there are some who's comfort zone is keeping to themselves concerning all things Christ...so much so that no one around them would even know of their faith. We must recognize that Jesus calls us out of those places. Jesus calls us to put our faith in Him in obedience to the Gospel. He calls us to grow in our faith and do things that might make us uncomfortable. Jesus calls us to be a bright light in a dark world. This morning, I'd like for us to talk about getting out of our boats, getting out of our comfort zones and keeping our eyes firmly focused on Jesus.

### **I. Some people never get out of the boat.**

- A. Again, the many lessons we learn from this story would never have been written or learned if Peter had not taken that first step out of the boat. But you know what?...who could have blamed Peter for not getting out of that boat! Even on a perfectly calm day, who in their right mind would be willing to get out of a perfectly buoyant boat in order to try and walk on water. No one would do that. Peter was in a perfect place of comfort.
- B. None of that mattered to Jesus, however. Jesus called for Peter to leave that place of comfort and come after Him. He called for Peter to do something that he never in his right mind would have otherwise done. Fortunately for Peter, he had the courage to take that step out...but oh how the story might have been different otherwise.
- C. Many people in this life don't have the courage of Peter. As was mentioned just a minute ago, many people aren't willing to get out of their comfort zones because they recognize that there are risk and sacrifices involved. Failure, struggles, and difficulties are possible and even probable when we venture out of what we have always known and been familiar with.
- D. This is true for the non-Christian just as it is for the Christian. Some non-Christians aren't willing to leave the comfort of self to go after Jesus because they realize that they will be made uncomfortable by the commands of Jesus. No longer will they be able to live for self and pleasure, but Jesus calls them to live for His name. That means giving up some of the things that they might enjoy doing.

- E. For the Christian, he/she might be comfortable with their level of faith or they might not have the boldness to publicly live out their faith. However, we must recognize that Jesus calls us to grow. He calls us to expand our faith, knowledge, and character in Christ. **(II Peter 1:5-11)** If we strive to grow, then we will not stumble and we will be fruitful for Jesus. If we are not willing to grow or live out our faith, then the opposite will be true. We will be neither fruitful nor useful in the service of God. It all begins with getting out of the boat, getting out of our comfort zones.

## **II. Some people get out of the boat, but quickly sink when they see the storms.**

- A. Peter was willing to take that initial step to exit the boat and put that foot upon the face of the waters. Things seemed to be going well for the outspoken Apostle of Jesus...but then the winds and the waters roared all around him and he started to sink in the water...
- B. While there are some who never get out of the boat, there are also others who are willing to take that first step. It might be that they are willing to die to self and live to Christ in baptism. They might be Christians who are willing to do what they can to grow their faith and live their faith each and every day, but...they quickly realize that the storm around them is fiercely raging. Just as quickly as they exit the safety of the boat...just as soon as they are willing to leave their comfort zones...they begin to sink and fall because they are not able to handle the difficulties of growth in Jesus Christ.
- C. The fact that some people come to Christ and then fall away isn't something that Jesus overlooked. In fact, His parable of the sower talked specifically about that type of disciple. Just a chapter earlier in **Matthew 13:3-9**, our Lord talks about the different types of soils or hearts that are within men. He talks about the soil that was full of rocks and the other that was full of thorns. Both of these seeds reached the soil and seemed to make some progress, but the sun and the thorns quickly snuffed them out. And so it is with some Christians.
- D. Some Christians make the commitment to grow in Christ, but when the going gets tough...instead of growing and being sharpened by the struggles...these disciples shrink away and they give in. The new Christian is challenged with old temptations and quickly folds under the pressure. Individuals such as Ananias, Sapphira, & Simon might come to mind. The Christian who is seeking to grow realizes that growth sometimes hurts because we recognize that we might fail from time to time and instead of occasionally failing they just give into the same old same old lifestyle that God demands of them now where as Christians, but at least they're not failing in their own minds. Or maybe that Christian who is trying to live the life of a disciple day in and day out in the open feels the slightest bit of opposition and just like the seed they are choked by the thorns of the world and they give in.
- E. The struggles of these individuals doesn't automatically mean defeat, but they allow themselves to be defeated so easily because they fail to recognize where their strength truly lies. They fail to do as Peter did when his feet began to break the surface of the water...

## **III. Some people get out of the boat, start to sink, but immediately call out to Jesus for His saving help.**

- A. Thankfully, our story doesn't end with Peter sinking down into the water and never coming back up. Traditionally, with this story, we have focused on Peter and his lack of faith at this point. Instead of keeping his eyes focused on Jesus, he got distracted by the storm around him and he began to sink. This is the normal view that we see when considering this text. While this perception certainly has its lessons we can learn, and while it certainly is a credible view of this text, I would like for us to consider it from another point of view.
- B. Consider the fact that though Peter did become frightened by the raging storm, notice that he didn't just allow himself to be paralyzed with fear and sink fully. Instead, in the presence of the storms, and even though he is scared, Peter remembers who it is that is there and able to rescue him from the present danger. He didn't rely on himself. He didn't just give up all hope and resign to sinking. Instead, He reached out to Jesus and begged for help and saving in this storm.
- C. When it comes to the new Christian and when it comes to the Christian who is trying to better himself, they must recognize that there will be storms. Temptations will come up. Difficulties will come. Satan will not just tuck tail and run because they have committed themselves to Christ. Satan will continue to hound us and do whatever he can to cause us to stumble. We must be ready. He doesn't want for us to succeed. He doesn't want for us to grow. He doesn't want us to shine as a bright light in a dark world. He wants us to fail. **(I Peter 5:8)**

- D. How does that new Christian or that growing Christian respond to the storms that Satan sends their way. To them in the moment, they probably feel just as Peter felt as the storms were closing in around him and he began to sink. They feel as if they're going under and they aren't going to make it. And the truth is that on their own, no they're not going to make. On their own they are going to fall and sink and drown. However, if they are willing to do as Peter did and immediately reach out to Jesus...then they can survive the storms and make it out on the other side much better.
- E. There will be times when the new Christian faces immense pressure from old temptations and struggles. There will be time when the growing Christian is challenged to do more in his/her faith and they stumble or don't do something perfectly. There will be times where the shy Christian might meet stiff opposition. In those times where they feel as if they're sinking...they must reach out to Jesus and seek the safety and rescue that only He can give.

**IV. Jesus will always reach out to assist those who are willing to get out of the boat because they believe in the power of the Man who controls all things.**

- A. Again, let's remember that this whole occurrence began with Peter taking that step of faith by getting out of the boat based upon the command of Jesus to come to Him. If Peter never gets out of the boat then nothing that we have discussed is of any note. But Peter gets out of the boat, he begins to walk towards Jesus, he begins to sink with the storm, he calls out to Jesus, and Jesus extends His hand to catch His sinking disciple. Jesus asks Peter why he ever doubted in who He was. Sometimes we never get out of the boat because we forget who Jesus is.
- B. We forget that Jesus is the prophesied Messiah of God. We forget that Jesus was born of a virgin. We forget that Jesus performed so many miracles in the presence of many multitudes. We forget that Jesus prophesied of His own death. We forget that Jesus was raised from the dead on the 3rd day and that He ascended back to the right hand of the Father where He is ruling, today.
- C. We forget that Jesus was present when the world was created. We forget that He had a hand in the creation of the world. We forget that He continues to allow this world to exist. We forget that He holds all things together in His hand.
- D. When we forget these things then we never get out of the boat. We never commit ourselves to Jesus. We never commit to growing ourselves in the faith. We never make the effort to be more vocal and outgoing in our faith. BUT, when we remember that all of these things are true...then we are willing to do anything that He asks us to do. We are willing to commit to Him. We are willing to grow in our faith. We are willing to live out our faith in every aspect of our lives. We are willing to do all of these things because we recognize that Jesus is capable of strengthening us to do all things He might ask us to do. **(Phil. 4:13)** We are willing to be like Peter and get out of the boat and reach out for Jesus when the storms come upon us.

What is your boat? What is your comfort zone? Whatever it is...recognize that Jesus calls us to grow into the next step in our faith...whether that means establishing our faith...or growing our existing faith. Whatever your place may be, look to Peter and be encouraged to get out of the boat. Take that first step and look to Jesus for strength. Look to Him when we start to sink in the storms of life. Allow Him to lift you up and get you to where you need to go. May God help us to take that first step, and may He help us to look to His Son in all things. May we grow each and every day and may we strive to be that disciple that we can be with the help of Jesus all along the way in this life.